

REMARKS

The Office Action mailed November 24, 2003, has been reviewed and the Examiner's comments have been carefully considered. Claims 1, 4, 6, 7, 16, 18, and 20-24 have been amended. Claims 3, 5, and 25 have been canceled. The specification and drawings have been amended. In view of the foregoing amendments, claims 1, 2, 4, and 6-24 are pending and are submitted for reconsideration.

Claim Objections

The claims are objected to because the claim numbering includes two instances of "11." Beginning with the second instance, claims 11-24 have been renumbered as claims 12-25 as requested by the Examiner. The dependencies of claims 16, 18, and 21-24 have been amended accordingly. Withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

Drawing Objections

The drawings are objected under 37 C.F.R. § 1.84(p)(4) because the same reference characters have been used to illustrate different embodiments. The drawings and specification have been amended appropriately. Specifically, the reference numerals of the retaining devices in the embodiments of Figs. 2-8 have been amended so that each embodiment is represented by a different reference numeral. Replacement drawing sheets are provided.

The drawings are also objected to under 37 C.F.R. § 1.83(a) because the drawings fail to show the press-in rivet or clip of claim 5 and the vehicle door of claims 17 and 22.

Claim 5 has been canceled and "clip" in claim 4 has been replaced with "rivet." The "screw connections or riveted connections 5b" are shown in Fig. 3 as noted in the specification at page 6, paragraph [0039].

The vehicle door is not a feature of the claimed invention and therefore need not be shown in the drawings. The vehicle door of claim 17 is the motor vehicle component to which a feature of the claimed invention (i.e., a hook) is "adapted to engage" as recited in claim 1 from which claim 17 depends. Similarly, the vehicle door of claim 22 is the motor vehicle component (i.e., a strut) to which a feature of the claimed invention (i.e., a retaining

device) is to be “connected to” as recited in claim 20 from which claim 22 depends. Thus, the term “vehicle door” merely describes a feature of the claimed invention.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, reconsideration and withdrawal of the drawing objections are respectfully requested.

35 U.S.C. § 112 Rejections

Claim 25 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph as indefinite. Claim 25 has been canceled. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

35 U.S.C. §§ 102 and 103 Rejections

Claims 1-13, 15-23, and 25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,947,630 (Dillon). Claims 1-4, 6-11, 15, 16, 19-21, 23, and 25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,860,673 (Hasegawa). Claim 14 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Dillon or Hasegawa. Claim 24 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Hasegawa. Claims 1 and 20 have been amended. Support for the amendment is found, for example, in the specification at page 3, paragraph [0012]. The rejections should be withdrawn for at least the following reasons.

Neither Dillon nor Hasegawa (alone or in combination) discloses, teaches, or suggests a retaining device for an air bag module that “includes an opening for receiving a fastening device for connecting the retaining device to the component [of a motor vehicle]” where “the opening is located in an edge region of the retaining device such that the portion of the air bag module which is connected to the retaining device does not protrude over the opening” as recited in claim 1. Similarly, neither reference discloses, teaches, or suggests a system for connecting an airbag module to a motor vehicle that includes a “retaining device [that] has . . . an opening for receiving a fastener for connecting to the component [of a motor vehicle]” where “the opening . . . is positioned so that the fastener may be inserted through the opening and connected to the component after the portion of the airbag module is connected to the retaining device” as recited in claim 20. The cited references are addressed in turn below.

Dillon

Dillon discloses an airbag module 30 that includes a housing 70 having “an opening 86 in its bottom through which a fastener 300 . . . can be inserted.” (Dillon at col. 2, lines

10-12.) The Office Action contends that the opening 86 “is on an edge ‘region’ (See Figure 4, it is not centered) and is not obstructed by the air bag module, since the clip sticks out of the back of the retainer.” (Office Action at p. 4.) However, claim 1 calls for an opening located “such that the portion of the air bag module which is connected to the retaining device does not protrude over the opening.” In contrast to the claimed invention, Dillon discloses an air bag module cover 100 that connects to the housing 70 and extends over the entire opening 86, as shown in Fig. 4. Thus, Dillon cannot anticipate claim 1 because Dillon does not disclose all the elements set forth in claim 1.

Similarly, claim 20 calls for an opening “positioned so that the fastener may be inserted through the opening and connected to the component after the portion of the airbag module is connected to the retaining device.” However, once the cover 100 of Dillon is connected to the housing 70, the fastener 300 cannot be installed in the opening 86. As shown in Fig. 12, the housing 70 is connected to a seat frame 26 by inserting the fastener 300 in the opening 86 and deforming an end 308 of the fastener 300 so that the housing 70 is clamped between the deformed end 308’ and a collar 214. (Dillon at col. 2, lines 45-51.) The end 308 of the fastener 300 is located within the housing 70. (Dillon at Fig. 12.) Thus, deforming the end 308 requires access to the interior of the housing 70. Because access to the interior of the housing 70 is precluded after the cover 100 is connected to the housing 70, the housing 70 of Dillon must be connected to the seat frame 26 before the cover 100 is connected to the housing 70. Thus, Dillon cannot anticipate claim 20 because Dillon does not disclose all the elements set forth in claim 20.

For at least these reasons, Dillon does not anticipate the claimed invention. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1 and 20 as anticipated by Dillon are respectfully requested.

Hasegawa

Hasegawa discloses an air bag apparatus 14 that includes an air bag case 25 having a lid 36 connected to base 27 by a hinge 38, as shown in Fig. 1. (Hasegawa at col. 10, lines 33-38.) The air bag case 25 is connected to a seat back frame 16 by bolts 15 and nuts 17. (Hasegawa at col. 9, lines 51-54.) In contrast to claim 1, however, the lid 36 extends completely over the openings in the base 27 through which the bolts 15 are inserted, as shown in Figs. 1 and 3. Thus, Hasegawa cannot anticipate claim 1 because Hasegawa does not

disclose an opening located “such that the portion of the air bag module which is connected to the retaining device does not protrude over the opening” as called for in claim 1.

Similarly, claim 20 calls for an opening “positioned so that the fastener may be inserted through the opening and connected to the component after the portion of the airbag module is connected to the retaining device.” However, the bolts 15 of Hasegawa “are vertically provided within the air bag apparatus 14.” (Hasegawa at col. 9, lines 51-52.) As shown in Figs. 1 and 3, the bolts 15 extend outwardly from the assembled air bag apparatus 14. The assembled air bag apparatus 14 is connected to the seat back frame 16 by inserting the protruding bolts 15 through corresponding holes in the seat back frame 16 and installing nuts 17 on the bolts 15, as shown in Figs. 1 and 3. Because the bolts 15 vertically protrude from the assembled airbag apparatus 14, the bolts 15 must be inserted through the openings in the base 27 before the lid 36 is connected to the base 27. Thus, Hasegawa cannot anticipate claim 20 because Hasegawa does not disclose all the elements set forth in claim 20.

For at least these reasons, Hasegawa does not anticipate the claimed invention. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1 and 20 as anticipated by Hasegawa are respectfully requested.

Claims 2, 4, and 6-24 depend from claims 1 or 20 and are allowable therewith, for at least the reasons set forth above, without regard to further patentable limitations contained therein. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of these dependent claims are respectfully requested.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant believes that the application is now in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration of the application as amended is respectfully requested. If there are any questions regarding the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned attorney at the phone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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